



Tzelem Group Leader Manual



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Preface

Thank you for joining in partnership with Moving Traditions and many other Jewish institutions of all denominations to answer the question:

How can we draw on Jewish values and focus a gender lens to help pre-teen and teenage teens address the challenges of their daily lives?

Teens need us—given academic stress, bullying and questions about friendship, confusion around romantic and sexual relationships, and other challenges they face in adolescence that are exacerbated by the 24-hour cycle of their lives—yet most teens drop out of Jewish community after b’nai mitzvah, just when they need us most.

We do know that teens love Rosh Hodesh, Shevet and Tzelem. In Tzelem, we create safe spaces for same-grade groups of middle and high school teens (though some Tzelem groups are multi-grade) with Moving Traditions-trained adult leaders—and in so doing we empower teens to find meaning and guidance from Jewish community.

As you enter this experience with Moving Traditions and with your group (or groups!) of teens, I welcome your partnership in realizing our vision of a future when Jewish teens will:

- Experience Jewish community as a source of support and strength.
- Be equipped to challenge narrow and negative ideas of what it means to be a gendered person put forward by peers or in popular culture.
- Believe that all people are full and equal participants in Judaism and in every sphere of life.
- Expect to participate in a Moving Traditions Teen group, just as they now expect to become a b’nai mitzvah.
- Participate as leaders as adults in both secular and Jewish life.

Thank you for building a Jewish future for and with our teens. I wish you a deeply meaningful experience in your Tzelem groups.

Deborah Meyer
Moving Traditions

Founder and Chief Executive Officer Deborah Meyer has more than 25 years of leadership experience in the non-profit world, building women’s and Jewish organizations.

Starting and Nurturing a Group

Thank you for being a Tzelem group leader. We are pleased that you have joined the hundreds of adult mentors across North America who serve as guides, facilitators, role models, and mentors to the teens in their Moving Traditions groups. And thank you for partnering with us in running a Tzelem group during what is still an early year of the program. We look forward to your input in helping us grow the program, and, in providing resources (like this one) to support you and future group leaders in this work.

Your role as a group leader is paramount to the success of the teens' Tzelem experience. Each group leader brings different skills and strengths. Some are comfortable engaging teens in a variety of modalities, and some bring experience facilitating groups. Others understand the developmental issues of adolescent teens. Still others are conversant in—or receptive to learning more about—Judaism. Sharing any of these qualities will greatly enhance the group.

Regardless of your background, one of the most important things you will bring to this experience is your *kavannah*—your intention. Adolescents are experts in detecting who is being “real,” so enjoy the experience and be authentic with them as you build these relationships.

Steps for the Group Leader

This task list is explained in detail in the paragraphs that follow:

1. With your supervisor, select an **age group** (Tzelem groups may span multiple grades).
2. With your supervisor, identify potential **meeting times and locations** (if you are meeting in person).
3. Publicize the program and **recruit members**.
4. Invite teens and parents to an **Introductory Meeting**.
5. Establish and sustain **relationships with parents and teens** before the group begins and between meetings.
6. Attend the training and make the most of ongoing support.
7. Partner with Moving Traditions for the continued success of Tzelem.

1. Select an age group.

The Tzelem program is designed for teens to begin in 8th grade. In the 8th grade year, most teens have already experienced their b'nai mitzvah and have reached a new level of maturity. Research shows a dip in participation in Jewish life at this stage—and for teens whose gender and/or sexual identities do not conform to cisnormative or heteronormative standards, figuring out if there is a place for them in the Jewish community can be particularly

complicated. Tzelem can keep teens engaged and connected with your institution and with each other through a meaningful, engaging, and inclusive post-b'nai mitzvah Jewish experience.

If your Tzelem group is multi-grade (as many are), be aware of the developmental differences and discuss with your supervisor strategies for accounting for multiple ages/developmental stages in the topics you cover.

2. Select meeting location and times.

If you are meeting in-person, the space in which the teens gather should be **informal and intimate**, yet **ample** for approximately ten teens to sit in a circle. It must offer privacy and be a place where **food, active games, and crafts will be welcome**. Everything does not have to take place in the same room. You may gather initially in one setting, and adjourn to another space for games, crafts, eating, or other activities. It's a good idea to check the "Gathering Plan" preparation notes for any special monthly requirements (e.g., space for yoga). There are two models that have been successful: home-based and institution-based.

Home-based Groups

Home-based groups, which rotate the meetings among the teens' homes, provide inviting, hospitable environments. They foster the teens' sense of ownership of the group and commitment to its success. Host teens can be asked to assume a variety of leadership roles, from phone calls to facilitation. Meeting in homes may require attention to socioeconomic differences among the teens and may present challenges related to family lifestyles, such as noise, parent or sibling intrusion, comfort with "mess," level of *kashrut*, or allergies to pets. If you are holding the first gathering in a home, you may not be able to confirm the location until three to five weeks in advance, when you have a few teens on board and have received a commitment from a host parent.

Institution-based Groups

Alternatively, your sponsoring institution may prefer to host the monthly gatherings in its own facility. This model can provide consistency for the Tzelem group and deepen the teens' relationship with the host institution. If you are meeting in an institutional setting, you may wish to pay extra attention to ritual and decorative features that will increase the sense of intimacy and ownership of the space. Teens can rotate being the "designated Host Teen," providing food, helping to set up the room, lighting the candle, and possibly facilitating part of the meeting.

Scheduling

Your choice of meeting time may intersect with your choice of location. For instance, institutions' buildings may be open on a limited schedule. Many groups meet one Sunday afternoon or evening a month, while others find a weekday afternoon or evening more

amenable. Make sure that the time and place you pick is optimal for most of the teens who will be in your group and be consistent with day and time—unless you need to adjust the schedule to avoid secular and religious holidays and competing events in the community.

3. Promote the program and recruit members.

Your objective should be to create wide name recognition for the program, create a “buzz” in the community, and stimulate interested teens and parents to find out more—or at least to be receptive when your individualized letter arrives. Plan a multi-pronged approach to letting teens and their parents know about the program.

- You can recruit teens using these strategies:
- Encourage word-of-mouth and peer outreach by present group members.
- Speak with parents in adult affinity groups.
- Mail flyers using institutional mailing lists.
- Send announcements using institutional e-mail lists.
- Place articles in institutional/organizational newsletters.
- Place listings and/or advertisements in organizational program guides.
- Post announcements on web sites.

In addition, community institutions may also offer you the opportunity to publicize through:

- Placing brochures and posters in community settings (JCCs, pizza shops, cafes, etc.).
- Staffing a table at special events, such as community fairs.

Our recruitment toolkit is available on the Moving Traditions website. And talk it up to as many people as you can. Spread the word!

Emphasize Peer and Parent Outreach

Note that one effective, time-efficient way to get a group going is to find an **interested teen or core of teens** who will want to involve their friends. As you would expect, teens are more apt to attend if they know that their friends will be there. If there is an existing group in your area, asking current participants to do **peer outreach** can be very effective. **Parents** can also be great assets to recruitment. Find one or two parents who have age-appropriate teens to help you build the group.

4. Invite teens and parents to an introductory meeting.

We have found that an introductory meeting with teens and parents is one of the most effective ways of obtaining a commitment from both the teens and their parents. This session, “**Taste of Tzelem**” (curriculum guide found on our website under recruitment toolkit) provides information about the program and allows both to experience firsthand what a *Tzelem* gathering is like. **It is best to host this meeting in the spring—before the teens go**

away for the summer. Excite the teens and parents early and you won't have to run after them later!

You can present this meeting yourself, or invite your supervisor or an experienced group leader to help you facilitate. Also, if possible, invite a teen or some teens who have participated in Tzelem or a Moving Traditions Teen Group to attend and “excite” the teens about the program.

Rather than sending emails, personalize invitations to the introductory meeting, hand-address the envelopes, and mail with attractive stamps. These steps may seem insignificant and time-consuming, but these touches will effectively distinguish the letter from junk mail and will signal to each teen that she is being personally invited to a special group.

Our experience supports publicizing the group to large numbers and inviting about 20 teens to the introductory teen-parent meeting. This usually becomes a group of 8-12 committed and excited teens for your ongoing group. It generally takes a few sessions for the group to “settle in” and a core group of steady teens to solidify. The group may choose to become closed at that point, or explore the inclusion of new members as the issue arises.

Follow-up

We strongly recommend that soon after a teen has expressed interest in a group, you have a conversation with their parent(s)*. In addition to reviewing the expectations regarding meeting times, attendance, hosting, and costs, this will give you the opportunity to answer parental questions and address any concerns. It will also allow you to ask the all-important question, **“Is there anything I should know about your child?”** so that you can be made aware of concerns, such as kashrut, allergies, and any other religious, health, or social issues.

*For Tzelem groups, there are occasionally teens who do not have their parents' support (and Tzelem gives them the supportive space they need for exploring and validating their identity). Discuss with your supervisor a policy for allowing teens to register without their parents' knowledge.

5. Establish and sustain relationships with parents and teens before the group begins and between meetings.

Parents

Parent understanding of and support for your Tzelem group is vital to the group's success. Beyond the practicalities of driving the teens (if meeting in-person), paying for the group, and putting meetings on the family calendar, parents can support the mission and vision of Tzelem in important ways. When parents understand the group, they “spread the word” in the

community for future groups, support institutional funding, reinforce concepts at home, and can be resources for you, as well.

Parents need to be informed about the nature and intent of the monthly gatherings and the expectations for their involvement. If your group meets in homes, it is particularly important that parents fully understand the group's needs for privacy and appropriate spaces for food, craft projects, and candle rituals.

Follow-up communication to confirm dates and location of meetings is also important. E-mail parents periodically with a summary of the last gathering, without sharing any information that violates the group's "safe space." By focusing on the objectives, you can inform parents about the gatherings while respecting the group's commitment to confidentiality.

Other ideas for connecting with parents include hosting a parent/child gathering, end of year celebration, or parent workshop. You might consider creating a parent advisory committee at your institution or setting up a liaison parent for your group.

Teens

The teens will grow to appreciate that this is a group of their own. (For many of them, this will be the first Jewish educational experience that they are choosing for themselves.) From the start, it is important that you convey to them that you are partners in establishing a unique, special, and valuable experience.

Before the introductory meeting, call each teen whom you have invited and extend a personal invitation. Ask about hobbies and interests. Inquire if they have any friends who might also be interested in joining the group. Listen to the teens and learn about them right from the onset of your relationship.

This program is a unique model, different from their other experiences—let teens sense this from the start. The medium is the message. Create flyers and other recruitment materials that are colorful and teen-friendly and that reflect the fun experience they will have in their Tzelem group. Hold high expectations for the teens' involvement in the group and, of course, for yourself. Let the teens know you value their experiences by bringing thoughtfully prepared, high-quality supplies. If meeting in-person, ensure that snacks are both healthful and fun—and, by linking to the themes of the session, if possible, an experiential learning opportunity. Most of all: let the teens be themselves.

It may take several meetings for the group to bond and for friendships to form. You can help this process by cultivating the group between meetings. Group leaders have sent birthday cards, pictures of the previous meeting, articles of interest, and appropriate web site links to

the teens. Be patient—we expect that over time your high expectations for the group will be fulfilled and all your nurturing efforts will bear fruit.

6. Attend a National Training Conference and make the most of ongoing support.

Attendance at a Moving Traditions National Training Conference is required for all new group leaders and is consistently rated by participants as a “superior professional development” opportunity. Our professional trainers are knowledgeable and passionate about Tzelem, are excited to meet you, and are committed to working with you to ensure that your Tzelem experience will be wonderful—for you, your institution, and most importantly, the teens. You will meet other facilitators from around the country and will gain proficiency in:

- Using the Tzelem materials.
- Facilitating groups.
- Dealing with issues facing adolescent teens.
- Marketing and recruitment.

Moving Traditions is committed to your success. We encourage you to take advantage of the consultation and support we offer through our group leaders’ web site, our Facebook page, direct e-mail, and personal contact with our field support staff.

7. Partner with Moving Traditions for the continued success of Tzelem

Tzelem is the product of several years of writing, field-testing, and editing—made possible by Moving Traditions’ staff and Board and by the national funders committed to the program and its mission. It is also a living, dynamic program that is being expanded and updated every year.

You are a crucial link in the chain of this program’s continuity. Every time you report a wonderful experience, give us feedback that will allow us to improve the curriculum, or post an idea in the Facebook group for Moving Traditions group leaders, you are contributing to the program and helping to support your colleagues and teens across the continent. Send us pictures of your teens, and share both your challenges and successes!

Finally, you and your supervisor are our links to the teens and their families. We will be reaching out to you at times during the year to ask for your help in acquiring contact information. We need this important information for our own self-evaluation as well as for reporting to our funders—and we thank you in advance for your assistance!

Successful Timeline for Starting and Nurturing Your Group

Note: This three-month timeline/checklist is structured to lead to a teen-parent introductory meeting prior to the launching of your group. You may need to adapt it to your own needs, but we suggest that you refer to it regarding sequencing and timing of tasks.

The Spring Before Launching a Group (April-June)

Decide who, where, and when:

- Identify age/grade level for outreach in conjunction with your supervisor.
- Get contact information for each teen and her parent you want to invite.
- Set the date, time, and place for the teen-parent introductory meeting and spread the word:
 - Use the template flyer for “Taste of *Tzelem*: An Introductory Meeting.” (See our website under recruitment toolkit.)
 - Publicize: send e-mails, go into Hebrew School classrooms, distribute flyers to parents, send snail mail, make calls—get teens and their parents to this meeting! Invite the teens to bring a friend.
 - Send invitation letters to prospective parents and teens. (See sample letters on the following pages.)
 - Prepare for the meeting. (See “Taste of *Tzelem* Session Guide” on our website under recruitment toolkit.)
- Host the teen-parent introductory meeting:
 - Collect contact information of teens and parents that attended.
 - Ascertain best times and locations for meetings.
 - Get the teens and their parents excited before they go away for the summer and, if possible, let them know the date of their first group gathering in the fall.
- Identify potential times and places for monthly meetings in conjunction with your supervisor.
- Finalize time and place for monthly meetings in conjunction with your supervisor.
- If needed, determine best ways to recruit more teens by the fall (i.e., teens bring friends, etc.)

The Late Spring and Summer (June-August)

Get people on board to support the group’s success:

- Expand name recognition and reinforce a strong “buzz” in your institution. (Contribute a *Tzelem* article to the institutional bulletin, Hebrew School launch packet, etc...)
- Speak with adults in affinity groups at your institution, rabbis, education directors, board members. The more people who are invested in the success of the program, the more successful it will be.

- Develop the meeting schedule for the year, consulting the Jewish holiday calendar, national holiday calendar, community, and institution calendars. Distribute the schedule both with the letters to the parents and at the teens' opening gathering.
- Write a letter of invitation and introduction to the parents of teens who have expressed an interest in joining the group. Include:
 - A reminder of the introductory gathering last spring.
 - Where and when the group will be meeting.
 - Any fees.
 - Your enthusiasm for the new group.
- Create a fun, personalized note or postcard to each teen, inviting them to the first meeting, to go out at the end of the summer.

The Late Summer/Early Fall (Just Before the Group Begins)

Confirm attendance for the first meeting:

- Send the invitation to each teen.
- Call each household to find out whether they received the invitation and to personally confirm attendance at the first meeting. Try to speak with both the parent and the child.
 - Answer any questions.
 - Review the few expectations the group will place on parents, including hosting parameters (privacy, space for food and crafts, contribution of food and snacks), fees, etc.
 - Confirm first gathering date(s) and location(s).
 - Ask whether there is anything helpful for you to know about the child's needs (e.g., kashrut, allergies, other special health needs or issues).
- Send e-mail/letter to host parents to confirm expectations.
- Send reminder e-mail to full list, confirming time and place of first gathering.

Sample Introductory Letter to the Parents:

Here is some suggested text that you can adapt to reach out to parents of potential participants.

Dear [parent's name],

I am writing to tell you about an exciting opportunity for [*child's name*]. This fall, we are launching Tzelem, a fun program Jewish teens say is a safe place to talk about challenges they face in adolescence.

Tzelem builds the self-esteem, Jewish identity, leadership skills, and friendship networks of adolescent teens. The group will meet monthly at/in [*homes of members/institution/other location*].

I am looking forward to leading the group. [*Add one or two sentences MAX about your personal background with teens' leadership.*]

We hope you and [*child's name*] can attend our parent-child "Taste of Tzelem" meeting. You'll get a chance to experience the program and ask questions. It is being held on [*day, date*] from [*start time*] to [*end time*], at [*place*].

I will be calling you and [*child's name*] soon to see if the two of you will join us, but feel free to call me at [*phone number*] or e-mail me at [*e-mail address*].

I look forward to seeing you both on [*the date*]!

Warmly,

[*Your Name*]

P.S. [*IF KNOWN:*] I am enclosing a list of tentative meeting dates for this year's meetings, so that you can mark your calendar now. Since consistent participation is important for group bonding, please let me know if you anticipate any conflicts with the dates we have chosen.

Sample Introductory Letter to Potential Participants:

Here is some suggested text that you can adapt to reach out to potential participants.

Hi [*participant's first name*],

I hope you had an amazing summer!

I am writing to introduce myself and to tell you a bit about Tzelem—a group for teens your age that meets once a month to talk, have fun, do art, discuss life...you think of it, we can do it! Other teens who have done Tzelem say it is a great way to feel good about being Jewish and being a teen.

I am really excited to lead this group and can't wait for us to get to meet and talk more.

Please come to the "Taste of Tzelem" meeting where you and a parent can meet me, see who else is interested, and see what Tzelem is all about! I will call you soon to touch base.

Looking forward to talking to you,

[*Your Name*]

Getting Parents On Board

Parent understanding of and support for your Tzelem group is vital to its long-term success. Besides getting their daughters there, offsetting the costs and keeping meetings on the family calendar, when parents understand the importance of the program, they can also help to sow the seeds for future groups in your community.

Parents often tell us how little they know about what goes on in the “secret society” of their child’s Moving Traditions Teen Group. While “what happens in Tzelem stays in Tzelem,” it is important to provide parents with details about the overall themes of the gatherings and topics discussed. In addition, we also recommend including talking points and discussion questions in your correspondence with parents.

Top Ten Ideas for Connecting with Parents

1. Host a Taste of Tzelem meeting as a part of your recruitment strategy. Even if you aren’t recruiting teens, it’s a great opportunity to connect with families in your group.
2. Distribute any Moving Traditions handouts after each gathering—you can do this electronically. Encourage parents to be on the lookout for other materials that may be of interest.
3. Email parents regularly with a summary of your gathering (use the At-A-Glance page for ideas). Parents love to be kept in the loop about what the teens explored in their gathering- but remember not to reveal anything private or violate the safe space of your group.
4. Whenever possible, ask families to host gatherings at their homes—both teens and parents value the opportunity to bring the group experience into their homes (clear this with your supervisor first). Plan to touch base with host families a few weeks before the gathering to confirm details.
5. Work with your supervisor to establish a lay committee of parents to support *Rosh Hodesh* at your institution. The committee can plan social and educational events for parents and sow the seeds for future groups.
6. Ask teens to interview a parent about a topic that relates to your next gathering, or to share something they learned with a parent. Remember to follow up on this at future gatherings. Some examples:

What was your favorite holiday when you were my age? Why?

Who were your role models?

What do you remember about being a teenager? What did you like most? What was hardest? What do you think is different for teens today?

Why are you glad that I’m in a Tzelem group?

What are your hopes for me in the future?

7. Some parents have expressed interest in holding their own discussion groups to complement our material. Though Moving Traditions bears no direct connection to these groups, we are delighted to know that parents are meeting and organizing.
8. Moving Traditions requires all institutions that are using our materials to send us contact information for all program participants and their parents. This includes each participant's full name, mailing address, and email address, synagogue, and grade, as well as their parents' names, mobile phone numbers, and email addresses. Providing Moving Traditions with this information allows us to be thorough with our evaluations and share useful resources with parents via our quarterly newsletter.

Calendar and Celebrations

FALL

- **Tishrey** (September/October): Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Simchat Torah
- **Heshvan** (October/November): no holidays
- **Kislev** (November/December): Hanukkah

WINTER

- **Tevet** (December/January): Hanukkah
- **Shevat** (January/February): Tu Beshvat
- **Adar (I)** (February/March)? Purim

SPRING

- **Nisan** (March/April): Pesach, Yom Hashoah (Holocaust Memorial Day)
- **Iyar** (April/May): Yom Hazikaron (Israel's Memorial Day), Yom Ha'atzmaut (Israel's Independence Day), Lag Be'omer (33rd day of the Omer), Yom Yerushalayim (Jerusalem Day)
- **Sivan** (May/June): havuot

SUMMER

- **Tammuz** (June/July): 17th of Tammuz
- **Av** (July/August): Tishah Be'av
- **Elul** (August/September): Selichot

Making the Most of This Material

Tzelem offers teens the opportunity to gather monthly to learn, laugh, and grow as they explore the challenges and joys of their lives, share their thoughts and experiences, and engage the wisdom of their heritage.

This Group Leader Manual is designed to serve as a step-by-step, user-friendly guide to establishing and facilitating these monthly gatherings.

This guide presents an overview of the approach and philosophy, an outline of the format and features of the monthly sessions (gathering plans), and suggestions for tailoring the material.

We have attempted to include all that is needed to guide and support successful implementation and facilitation of the groups, but, ultimately, it's in your hands! Therefore, we encourage you to

- **Read** the wisdom of the contributing experts.
- **Draw** on your own strengths and talents.
- **Reflect** on your own adolescence and face any discomforts you have with that challenging stage of life.
- **Work** to push beyond your areas of discomfort.
- **Challenge** yourself to be present and authentic in your interactions with the teens.

While the Tzelem curriculum is intended to serve as a how-to guide, it is our hope that each leader will bring their unique style, talents, and positive energy to the material. It is your ability to engage, read, and respond to the group that will bring this program to life.

Approach and Philosophy

The curriculum material draws on Jewish wisdom and practice as a resource for teens as they explore topics relevant to their lives. Its approach fosters self-expression, analytical thinking, and the validation of individual experience.

The method of facilitation is experiential, meaning that key concepts are designed to be solicited, rather than imposed. Discussions, reflective writing, dramatic improvisations, and traditional and creative rituals lead participants on a journey of discovery and self-awareness. On the way, they are guided and enriched by Jewish wisdom.

Although it is designed to honor diverse perspectives and experiences, the material reflects the values of pluralism and egalitarianism and a commitment to Jewish life and learning.

The Curriculum

The Tzelem curriculum is filled with engaging activities and thought-provoking exercises that teach teens self-respect, personal strength, and spiritual well-being.

Teens discuss social and emotional related topics such as identity, self-confidence, gender and gender roles/stereotypes, bodies and expression, healthy relationships, self-compassion, mental health, sex/dating/intimacy, Jewish identity.

Format and Features of the Monthly Sessions

Each session of the curriculum is devoted to a different topic. The curriculum is designed to be user friendly, outlining each activity as well as the discussion questions and framing necessary to make the activity relevant and meaningful for participants. The following is an overview of the components of the curricular sessions. Note that there are special elements in your first and last meetings of the year.

Curriculum Elements

Opening Ritual

The beginning of the gathering is an opportunity to welcome participants, open with the brief ritual lighting of a candle and recite a prayer for the new month, and present an opening question relevant to the overall theme of the meeting. The opening question is a springboard for later discussions or activities. It is open but contained, inviting the teens' voices early, but not encouraging lengthy discussion at this point. You may also choose to insert additional icebreaker activities at this point in the meeting. You can find a bank of icebreakers on the Moving Traditions website at: <http://bit.ly/2rhS3J5>

Jewish Wisdom

Throughout the curriculum are opportunities to engage with Jewish wisdom. This may consist of a story of a biblical or contemporary Jewish woman, a rabbinic or later Jewish teaching, an excerpt from Pirkei Avot (Wisdom of our Ancestors) or other Talmudic texts, or a discussion of a Jewish value. Don't be concerned if you are not a walking encyclopedia of Jewish knowledge and practice. The monthly gathering plans provide you with the background you need to be a resource to the teens in your group. That said, it can also be meaningful for teens to be invited to a Shabbat dinner in a Group Leader's home or to hear stories about her own Jewish journey.

Closing

A group ritual provides closure to the meeting. It may include candle-lighting, personal reflection, or a poem. The closing ritual is an essential component of the gathering, as it

provides a meaningful and anticipated way to demarcate the sacred space created by the group.

Facilitator's Resources

Each session is accompanied by several pages of Facilitator's Resources and Handouts. These are materials designed to be printed out before the session so that you can share them with participants during the session. Because we learned that most participants do not want to take papers home, we have generally limited the handouts to papers necessary to be used within the curriculum session.

Tailoring the Material

Making Modifications

We encourage you to take the first few sessions as an opportunity to gain familiarity with and confidence in the rhythm of the session plans as they are written. This experience will allow you, with increasing ease, to create sacred space, prime your participants with an opening question, then engage them in an interactive learning experience. You will gain comfort with highlighting lessons as they unfold, and bringing the group to closure with ritual and reflection.

We also invite you to use these first sessions to get to know the teens, attending to their aspirations, worries, and delights. Once you have a personal sense of them, you can begin to tailor the gatherings to respond to the unique needs or preferences of your group. You might substitute their real-life situations (as appropriate) in place of scripted scenarios or adapt/create material in ways described below. Use your insights to maximize every opportunity to foster your group's connection to you, to each other, and to their Jewish heritage!

Innovating

Use your talents. We hope that you will bring your special talents to enhance the material. One facilitator used their background in drama to skillfully convert a paired discussion activity into an improvisational theater exercise. Your strengths should be used to enhance the material. However, we also strongly encourage you to stretch yourself beyond your comfort zone, in order to always provide your group with the full array of modalities.

Give them what they love. You may notice that your group responds best to a particular approach; for example, some groups are enthusiastic about craft-making, while others prefer discussion. By all means, respond to that preference; if a month doesn't have a craft activity and your group loves such projects, go ahead and add one! Just be sure to link the craft activity to the theme and life lessons, as you see done in the materials. But be mindful not to

rely only on the group's apparent preferred modality. Everyone learns differently—there may well be a silent minority whose preferences are less visible.

Adjust to size. While the optimal group size is seven to twelve teens, there may be monthly variation in the group's size. Prepare for the maximum number of participants, but consider in advance how to adjust delivery of content with fewer numbers. For example, a dramatic presentation that involves eight teens may require creatively combining or omitting roles, or simply using a different format entirely, such as discussion or reflective writing.

Draw on community resources. Take advantage of local resources—consider museums, galleries, guest facilitators—to enhance themes of relevance.

Be Responsive. Although the gatherings are designed sequentially, the facilitator may choose to respond to an issue proactively by adding or changing an activity in a session or by skipping ahead to a session that deals with that issue rather than waiting to address it when it arises in the curriculum. For example, if teens in your group may talk about feeling overwhelmed and stressed and you might decide to jump ahead to the stress session or to incorporate a de-stressing activity into another session.

Keep the context. Even as you innovate, maintain what is familiar and cherished by the group. Begin with an opening question that stimulates thought, begins the personal sharing, and pulls the teens in. Include at least two different modalities for varied interest and broad appeal. Most importantly, be sure to maximize interaction and minimize speeches, and to include the opening and closing rituals. Plan where you want to take the group and the most fun way to get there!

Leadership Development Opportunities

Tzelem groups hold great possibilities for fostering leadership skills and should be mined for that potential. Teens can be given the opportunity to assume some responsibility for the success of their group. Make it clear that any degree of involvement is valued. Initially, teens can choose to send reminder texts, organize materials and snacks, or even monitor ground rules. Eventually, they can suggest a topic, develop and/or implement activity ideas, or facilitate scripted materials.

Work to identify and draw on each teen's unique style and strengths and afford them a leadership opportunity in that venue. Are they a poet? Encourage them to share some poems or lead a poetry writing in response to a topic. Do they love music? Perhaps they can lead the group in analyzing some pop songs for their messages and comparing them with Jewish values.

Once the rhythm and energy of a group is established, participants are very likely to suggest any number of activities and topics but may need help in maintaining the Jewish context.

Most importantly, by virtue of their active participation in the group, teens are called upon to be open, to listen, to respect themselves and others, and to discover and heed their inner voices. Such skills, fostered each month, are at the core of true leadership.

Facilitating Your Tzelem Group

As facilitator, you help the group develop its unique culture—one that promotes bonding, safety, free expression of ideas and feelings, and positive Jewish identity. You wear multiple hats: as coordinator, informal educator, facilitator, role model. Each of these important roles is explored below.

Coordinator

You are the logistics coordinator. You determine the time and date of the meeting and arrange for the location and necessary supplies. You are responsible for communicating with both the teens and their parents. To encourage regular attendance, you can use phone calls, texts, and e-mail. (See the “Starting and Nurturing a Group” section for correspondence samples.) When making arrangements, confirm with parents before assuming you proceed with your plan.

Make sure that both teens and parents are aware of the expectations of hosting. If the gathering is held in teens’ homes, the facilitator brings supplies, but the parents need to know the best place to set up for the group’s activities. Some activities may require a kitchen, an open room for movement, a table for crafts, or space to present a skit.

We encourage you to delegate some coordination responsibilities to the teens. For example, whether meeting in an institutional or home setting, you might ask the designated host teen to contact the other members of the group to confirm their attendance at a gathering. Although supervising her may be more labor intensive than doing the task yourself, this approach promotes participants’ ownership of the group and develops their leadership skills. If you do delegate responsibility to a teen, make sure she is clear about her responsibility, the timeline, and your expectations for checking in, because her tasks are essential to the group’s success.

Informal Educator

Tzelem gatherings create perfect opportunities for Jewish learning. With an experiential, participant-centered approach, learning happens through guided discovery, rather than didactic teaching. Dr. Joseph Reimer, an expert in Jewish identity and education, has outlined six characteristics of a great Jewish experiential learning program. A successful *Tzelem* gathering reflects these traits:

The program is well prepared.

The participants feel comfort and trust.

Participants identify with the group and feel that they belong.

Participants feel challenged, stretched, and engaged in the experience.

Participants have time to reflect.

Participants have time to act.

Keep these principles in mind as you walk the group through the warm-up, the introductions and instructions, and the thoughtful processing of the teens' experience and insights. In your role as an informal educator, you create the opportunity for the intended life lessons to emerge naturally from participation in and processing of the shared activity. Far more effective than “the moral of the story” pronouncements, good questions can help the teens themselves draw the connections between Jewish values and the activity at hand. Through this process, you will set up and support an unfolding “a-ha!” moment of self-discovery or new understanding that is revealed rather than imposed.

Facilitator

Excerpts from “Experiential Jewish Education: Impacting the Formation of Jewish Identity” by Shuki Taylor in Bryfman, David, ed. Experience and Jewish Education (Torah Aura Productions 2014)

In order to foster self-exploration while guiding learners towards predetermined outcomes, the educator must develop two distinct types of facilitation skills:

1. **Reflection:** reflection allows for the process of self-exploration to emerge and flourish. By asking questions that allow learners to respond to and reflect upon the experiences and the content to which they have been exposed, educators can allow learners to access the space they need and can help learners achieve an authentic process of self-exploration. Educators should ask open-ended questions that focus on thoughts about and feelings towards the experience.

In order to ensure authentic self-exploration, the educator should validate whatever feelings and thoughts learners express and should permit any type of reaction. This type of reflection will allow a multiplicity of voices, opinions and approaches to emerge.

2. **Framing and contextualizing:** this type of facilitation is geared towards pre-determined outcomes rather than self-exploration. The educator will frame and contextualize the experience in a specific fashion, so that it builds a narrative that can result in the outcomes. When using these skills, the educator does not want to gauge what learners might be feeling, but wants to guide learners towards outcomes. This facilitation

technique utilizes guided—rather than open-ended—questions.

When engaged in this type of the facilitation, if the educator is not satisfied with an answer, he/she/they should ask if anyone has another opinion. In this way, the educator will be able to build a narrative by asking directed questions and respecting whatever answers are given.

Both types of facilitation skills are necessary. If educators merely foster reflection, learners might get lost in the process of exploration and lose sight of the overall narrative. In such a case, learners might not recognize the deliberate connections that the educator tries to make between activities and experiences. On the other hand, if educators spend too much time framing and contextualizing experiences, they will not enable any form of self-exploration. As a result, learners are likely to lose their unique voices.

Once again, intentionality is crucial: the educator must recognize when it is necessary to use each type of facilitation skill in order to ensure a seamless process of intervention that balances pre-determined outcomes with self-exploration.

Role Model

As facilitator, you are a role model for embracing the delights and difficulties of an individual journey. Your words and actions speak volumes to the teens in your group. Modeling your ability to question, share, take risks, laugh, empathize, and connect will inspire them to do the same. Valuing yourself while respecting others, speaking out yet being willing to listen, being honest about the struggles and joys, seeking guidance from others and from your heritage as you find your own voice, always striving to learn and grow—these are at the heart of the life lessons which you can embody for the teens in your group.

The Art of Group Facilitation

Be Prepared: Read and follow the instructions outlined in “Before the Gathering” well in advance. As you review the Gathering Plan, familiarize yourself not only with the step-by-step instructions, but also with the Life Lessons, so that you can comfortably solicit and affirm these learning goals, which are designed to emerge naturally from the activities. Arrive early to set up the gathering space and greet group members in a relaxed, unhurried state.

Be Authentic: Be yourself. You don’t have to be “cool” for the teens to connect with you. You serve them best as a role model if you demonstrate comfort with who you are and an openness to discovering who they are and what they can teach you. Being true to yourself and striving to be the best version of yourself will inspire the teens to do the same for their own evolving selves.

Be the Safety Net: Help the group establish and maintain ground rules that create a fun and safe environment. Empower group members to notice and self-correct behaviors that are not in keeping with the group’s intentions. Sharing this responsibility demonstrates your belief in the group’s competence—but be willing to step in if necessary to ensure that all members feel safe, valued, and included.

Be Attentive: Notice individual and group dynamics, attending to both content and feelings. Listen for the unvoiced concern and the unasked question. You may choose to share your observations—either within the group or privately, as appropriate to ensure the comfort and participation of all members.

Be Flexible: Monitor the group’s receptivity and the pace of the gathering, and be willing to make adjustments if necessary. Be prepared to insert an “icebreaker” or respond to a timely issue of concern. Sometimes a discussion takes an unexpected yet valuable turn, providing an unplanned teachable moment. Don’t miss this opportunity for the sake of your previous agenda; acknowledge the group’s interest and adapt your goals accordingly.

Be Affirming: Be sure to use inclusive, supportive, non-biased language. Ask open-ended questions and respond honestly and without judgment. It’s okay not to have all the answers; you can seek and provide them later. You, like the teens, are always growing and learning. You can be each other’s teachers. Don’t impose your own views, but guide the group by the Jewish value of respect for self and others. Encourage all group members to participate in their own unique ways, and commend their efforts and insights.

Be Intentionally Inclusive: Be conscious of what you say and how you say it. Remember that not all teens come from the same backgrounds. Model and request the use of inclusive language, and avoid generalizations (such as “Teenagers are…” or “Jews believe…”). When issues are being explored, ensure that a full spectrum of viewpoints is presented. Elicit or give voice to perspectives not initially offered by the group (“Some people believe…, while others might say…”). Be aware of your body language and nonverbal cues. Encourage exchanges among group members, rather than dialogue between group members and you. You guide the group best when you aren’t controlling or even central to it.

Be Discreet: Group leaders report that they are sometimes caught off guard when asked to reveal their personal history. Your best judgment, personal style, and comfort level will determine how much of yourself you disclose. For example, if you are asked the age of your first sexual encounter, one response may be, “I’m glad you raised the topic for us. I’m open to discussing this topic, but not my own history. My decisions reflect my circumstances, values, and choices. You’ll need to assess those for yourself.” Or more simply, “I want to exercise my option to pass.” The teens also have the option of not telling all and will appreciate seeing how to say ‘no.’

Be Aware of Teen Issues Today: While the tasks of adolescent development are familiar, today's realities are different from what you faced as a teen. Learn what you can about their world. Ask questions that demonstrate your interest, not your judgment. Read articles written for and about teens, listen to teen music, and view popular movies, television shows, and websites. Understanding the joys and challenges of your group will enable you to help them flourish. Acknowledge what you don't know. The goal is not to modify your behavior for acceptance; your value to them is rooted in your openness, authenticity, and self-acceptance.

Be Self-Aware: Know your limitations and personal issues, and draw upon your strengths and talents. Learn to develop and trust your intuition when responding to group challenges. Reflect ahead of time on sensitive issues from your own adolescence that might be stimulated by group discussions. Prepare yourself for the unearthing of your emotional responses to common issues, such as popularity, relationships with parents, and performance anxiety. Your feelings are important assets that help you empathize with the teens.

Be Patient: Allow the time required for group comfort and cohesion to develop. Become comfortable with silence, providing time for the group to take responsibility for itself. Allow the teens to experience the gathering as their own. Nurture the group process, allowing it to unfold naturally.

Be Fun: Humor helps set a warm tone and reduces tension. The group experience should be an enjoyable one! Be willing to laugh at yourself and model your own ability to risk, learn, and have fun. Each gathering should include opportunity for playfulness (but, obviously, should never involve laughter at someone else's expense).

Be Prepared for Challenges: Inevitably, you will be called upon to respond to the challenges presented by the group as it evolves. The art and science of facilitation combine skill, intuition, and creativity to successfully guide the group process. Some typical difficult behaviors and suggested strategies for addressing them are listed here.

One common challenge to the group is the **monopolizer**. This person is longwinded and seems to desire endless attention. As facilitator, you must protect the group's time. This means assertively staying on schedule, even if it means cutting off the monopolizer directly by saying, "I am sorry to interrupt, but I want to be sure everyone gets a chance to speak." Sometimes it is necessary to gently coach the monopolizer and help them participate in the group more appropriately.

The flip side is the **silent non-participant**. You can employ strategies to encourage their participation. The quiet teen can be gently welcomed to speak about their craft project, to take their turn in the round robin, or to light the candle. You can invite them opinions or use pairs or small groups in which she might share more comfortably. Find out about their

interests and talents that may be their opportunities to contribute to the group. Keep in mind that shyness may just be a personal style and is not necessarily a problem requiring intervention. Check in with the quiet teen to find out if this is the case.

Another challenging issue that arises in many groups is **gossip** (*lashon hara*). For example, the teens may share details of experiences that reflect badly on someone who isn't present. As facilitator, you are responsible for reminding the teens of their ground rules. "It's not in keeping with our group intention of respect to talk about someone who is not present to defend themselves. Instead of discussing specific people, let's talk about the issue and ways to handle it." Model warmth, caring, and assertive positive regard, and hold clear expectations that group members will speak and act kindly.

Sometimes the group seems to have great potential, but it is not going well because there is one teen who is **consistently disruptive**. You are encouraged to address the issue privately and directly with the teen involved, being very behavior-specific. For example, you might say, "I notice that you often have a negative reaction when activities are introduced, like rolling your eyes and making comments. It's hard to keep the group energy positive with that behavior. I need you to become a more positive participant in the group next month. I think you have a lot to offer." If the problem persists, the facilitator must be proactive on behalf of the whole group. It is OK, and sometimes necessary, to make the difficult decision to counsel the teen to leave the group.

Be aware that sometimes a disruptive group member actually expresses a larger group dissatisfaction or is meeting the group's unconscious need to be distracted from what is planned. You may need to consider what needs to be changed in order to more actively engage the group.

When you are concerned about a teen's **serious emotional problem**, it must be handled outside of the *Tzelem* session. It is your responsibility to identify a concern, move the group back to the gathering plan, and then to follow up with the individual and their family as appropriate. A response plan will vary depending on the issue and should be developed in consultation with your supervisor. It is likely that your institution can offer support and referrals to appropriate professional resources. You are obligated to direct anyone at risk to a professional; it is not in the scope of your role as a *Tzelem* group leader to address serious problems yourself. Though *Tzelem* groups sometimes offer an opportunity to discuss sensitive issues, it is never appropriate to do a therapeutic intervention during a gathering.

Of course, teens in distress may share things with each other and not directly with you. Encourage a teen who may be concerned about a fellow group member to share their concerns with you or other adults who can help.

Be assured that the most common challenge for groups is that **they can become silly, giggly, loud, and chaotic**. Guide, but don't squelch, this energy. Remember that playful energy is fun. Fun builds friendship and keeps the group strong. Facilitating the *Tzelem* group well will develop your ability to be both flexible and assertive.

If you are well prepared and attend to the group, watching for signs of engagement or impatience, the *Tzelem* group will thrive, and the teens will continue to astonish you with their insight, enthusiasm, and creativity.

Believe in the Group: Seek and celebrate what is special about your group. Get to know and appreciate each group member and help each participant recognize the value of her contributions. Convey your enthusiasm and confidence in the group's ability to support each other, have fun, and grow. Your positive attitude and your respect for the teens set a tone for the group that becomes self-fulfilling.

We hope that you enjoy the many hats a *Tzelem* facilitator wears—coordinator, informal educator, role model, and process facilitator. Of course, the most important "hat" you wear is your own. The spirit, dedication, and fun that you bring to the group are what make it a cherished experience for everyone.

Empowering Teens

Teach teens to be critical thinkers: Teach teens to question the pervasive narrow definitions of teenhood and gender. Remind them that they are complex, multi-faceted, unique human beings and encourage them to embrace their gifts.

Do and model your own "work": Teens learn to become confident adults through the adults in their worlds. We can't help teens feel good about themselves, or their bodies, if we can't do these things ourselves. You don't have to wait until you've figured it all out—model the struggle. Acknowledge that it can be difficult to create healthy relationships or stand up for yourself. Teens will learn to love themselves by watching adults who do.

Stop commenting on bodies—your own or others: Show teens that you value people for their actions, thoughts and accomplishments rather than their appearance. Model that feeling good about yourself comes from what we DO not how we LOOK. Teens don't need any additional pressure to be thin or flawless—it is ever-present in our society. Be the change you want to see and monitor your negative self-talk and your comments talking about weight, bodies, and dieting.

Engage teens' full range of emotions: Contrary to messages teens are getting, they are entitled to the full range of their emotions, including the negative ones, such as anger and

jealousy. Give them permission to feel their emotions and teach them how to express themselves, so that they can speak and act honestly and directly.

Create safe spaces: In today’s fast-paced hyper-technological world, teens need safe spaces carved out for them to explore their lives, try out new roles and voices, and feel confident in their choices. Offering teens time to pause, reflect and consider their options is essential for their personal growth.

Be present: Listen to teens. Show them your interest by asking them questions about their lives as well as their opinions on a variety of issues. By offering open-ended questions you help teens deepen their understandings of their feelings, situations and the actions they may wish to take. Try to refrain from always offering your wisdom, and create space for them to discover their own.

Support programs and people that empower teens: Attend museum exhibits, speakers and events that celebrate people of all genders, identities, and expressions and their accomplishments. Tell teens what matters to you—with your words and your actions. Send them links to great articles, blog posts and websites. Support programs that give teens the opportunity to learn important life skills and grow into the fullest expression of themselves.

Experiential Learning in Tzelem Groups

It’s almost a law of nature: give people permission to play, and they’ll seize it. It is the act of creating, not what it ends up looking like, that is distinctively gratifying. —Lauren Pokras

The *Tzelem* program includes an experiential activity in almost every monthly gathering—crafts or cooking, role plays or movement, guided visualizations or writing. Used in the right spirit, these modalities are among **the most effective teaching tools** available to you—and the “**fun quotient**” keeps the teens coming back month after month, year after year.

The program is designed to call upon and develop all of a teen’s **multiple intelligences**—including, but not limited to, the intellectual IQ that dominates in most learning settings. In this program, we are also tapping the **emotional, creative, and interpersonal potential** of each teen. Some teens favor the verbal, some the nonverbal; some prefer using their hands, some their full bodies; therefore, we have varied the modalities from month to month, with an eye to overall **diversity and balance**.

Regardless of the modality, the most important underlying values are:

- Process, not product.
- Creativity, not repetition.
- Curiosity, not assumptions.

As a facilitator, you can create a **nonjudgmental atmosphere** that frees the teens to see that learning is accessible and that their own ideas are valuable. These experiences build the teens' confidence in their own ideas, personal expression, and individuality and provide them with a valuable direct experience of **independence**.

In creative expression, adolescent teens **freely manage their own ideas**. Creative activities also give them some control over their time and effort, how the meeting goes, and the character of the group.

At the same time, many adolescents are self-conscious and may not be eager to step out of their comfort zones to try some new modalities. This is a “life lesson moment”—for both you and the teens! For the group leader, it underscores the importance of being a role model who is willing to try new things, even if it risks looking silly. For the participant, it is a reminder that looking silly can be fun and liberating and that what other people think really doesn't matter all that much.

For teens, **the best teaching methods are often indirect**. They do not generally respond to questioning or lecturing. (Really, who does?) In creating something—a craft, an improvisational role, a poem—teens get to discover something about themselves that may surprise them. Most importantly, it's coming from themselves, not from an external source. **What we discover *ourselves* is what we remember best—and helps mold who and how we are in the world.**

Creative exercises give teens an opportunity for more concrete **self-expression**. They also give teens an age-appropriate path into their **interior lives**. Adults can sit around in a group processing our experiences all night, but for teens it's often boring. They're typically not as equipped for interior searching in the way adults are, so they need different avenues to go inside—through crafts, theater, writing, movement, music, and more.

Curricular modalities

This curriculum is designed to meet the needs of participants with diverse interests and learning styles. One of the ways it endeavors to do this is by including a range of modalities, detailed below. All modalities will not necessarily appear in every session, but each session includes multiple modalities. Frequently, you will be able to choose which types of activities to bring to your group.

Over the course of the year, you will gain insight into the kinds of activities your participants prefer as well as the those that feel most authentic to your facilitation style. That said, there is value in occasionally pushing your participants and yourself to try out modalities that are outside of their/your comfort zones. In fact, being open with participants about how you find a

modality challenging can help you model risk-taking and vulnerability for participants in order to encourage them to take risks and be vulnerable within the group.

Videos

The videos included in the curriculum are designed to spark conversation related to the theme of the month. Often, there are several options of similar videos, allowing the group leader to choose which they think is best for the maturity and interests in their group.

Role Play

Role play activities give participants a chance to try out new communication techniques in a supportive environment. These types of activities may feel silly or awkward at first to participants and group leaders. However, many participants have found them to be a powerful and helpful way to physically experience what it's like to communicate in more effective and assertive ways. Just as a musician or athlete needs to practice in order to improve their skills, so too all of us can benefit from practicing new ways of communicating and asserting ourselves and even new ways of being in our bodies.

Improvisational role playing activities give the teens a chance to use their imaginations to step into the shoes of someone different from themselves—perhaps a parent or an ancient biblical figure—or someone like themselves in a different situation—such as a teen confronting her parents about trust issues. Taking on a role is like putting on a mask—it permits us more **freedom to experiment**, and, paradoxically, **to be more authentic** than if we just think or talk about what we might do in a given situation.

- To create a **supportive context** for the role plays, let the teens know that:
 - **No one has to** participate if they are not comfortable doing so.
 - You are available for “side-coaching”—advice given from the side on how to play the role.
 - Anyone who gets stuck or overwhelmed in a role can get out of it just by asking.
 - There is no one right interpretation—this is **imaginative play**.
- Key words in introducing role plays are “**invite**” and “**imagine**,” as in “Now I invite you to imagine that you are Evan...” “Invite” is pleasantly nondirective (and who doesn't want to be invited?). “Imagine” opens people up to this kind of play, while the word “pretend” closes people down. (It suggests duplicity and keeps them trying to operate two selves at the same time.)
- This may seem counterintuitive, but do NOT tell the teens how safe the activity is. It's an odd paradox. As soon as you assure people that something is safe, they immediately worry about why you are reassuring them—and their sense of safety actually diminishes!

- The key to effective role playing is to speak AS the character. If a teen uses language like “I might...” Or “I think I would...” gently encourage her to speak as the character, “I will...” or “I am feeling...”
- Make sure there is the opportunity for everyone who might want to participate to do so. Don’t allow the activity to be taken over by those teens with the strongest “acting hunger,” whether because they imagine themselves to be amateur actors or because they have a need to “act out.” Occasionally ask the teens who are always the first to volunteer to give others a chance to go first.
- After role plays, give the participants a way to return to their “everyday selves” by “de-role-ing.” This can be done simply by asking them to change seats or stretch, or by asking them to answer a question that they have to think about, such as “What is your favorite ice cream?”

Writing

Writing components range from letter writing, responding to creative prompts, poetry, and more. Writing provides participants the opportunity to work independently, be introspective, and flex creative muscles.

Journaling is listening to your inner voice and putting it to paper. Journaling and personal writing provide **quiet, reflective moments** in a gathering and can be an important part of the overall rhythm of the session. Teens are asked to do a great deal of writing for school, but they are rarely asked to write **from the heart, just for themselves**—for no other reader, no judge, no grade.

Writing activities provide an opportunity for the teens to **find their authentic private, personal voice**. The ability to summon that voice will be an invaluable asset throughout their lives.

For this activity to be successful, the teens must feel confident that what they write will remain **private**. Please speak to your group about respecting their friends’ **space, property, and personal boundaries**.

- Encourage the teens to spread out in the room and to each draw an imaginary curtain around themselves for privacy. When the time is up, ask them to open their curtains and step out into the common space of the room.
- It sometimes takes a few minutes to warm up, especially if they are new to journaling or have had very busy days. If transitioning to writing is difficult, encourage them to check in with all their senses and note what they see, hear, feel, smell, and taste as a centering warm-up.
- To get past writing blocks (all writers get them!), teach them the trick of freewriting: put the pen to paper and write whatever comes into your mind as fast as you can. Do not lift

the pen from the paper. Do not judge. Do not edit. If you can't think of anything, write, "I can't think of anything," over and over again until you think of something else, and write that. Keep going until the time is up.

Art Projects

Art projects range from drawing and coloring, to creating ritual objects or other useful things that can serve as reminders and links between *Tzelem* and the rest of life. Art projects provide participants with a creative, hand-on experience as well as a chance to relax and focus, often relieving the stress of a social situation. Many group leaders report that some of the most meaningful and productive discussions within their groups have occurred while participants were doing an art activity. Once the directions have been given, participants are free to chat, work on their own, or help one another as suits them individually and as a group.

We recommend creating an example or two of the art project to bring to the session to give participants a sense of the different approaches they might take to the project. It is also helpful to stress that art in *Tzelem* is another way of practicing not being perfect or aiming for perfection but instead focusing on fun, creativity, and play.

Games and Icebreakers

Similar to the videos, games are designed to spark conversation related to the month's theme. They often promote fun and laughter, and get participants physically moving. Games at the beginning of sessions are also used to break down initial barriers, to set a mood, and to energize teens for the coming activities in the session. Some icebreakers create group bonding and collaboration. In other cases, a warm-up **lightly introduces** a process or topic that will then be explored with a more serious intention.

If you need **additional games or icebreakers** for your group, we suggest you refer to the Moving Traditions website (<http://bit.ly/2rhS3J5>) or any of the following great resources:

Cooking

A cooking activity closely resembles a craft project in that each involves materials, tools, and a creative process (in this case, a "recipe"). Like a craft activity, cooking tends to be **high-energy, somewhat messy, time-consuming, and an opportunity to talk.**

- For the same reasons that it is important to make samples of the crafts, it is essential to **try the recipe(s)** you will be using.
- **Make notes** regarding required ingredients and utensils, based on your experience with the directions. The middle of the meeting is not the time to figure out that the butter should be cut in half, or that you need a spatula.

- **Make no assumptions!** When cooking, *check in advance* with the host family or institution regarding the availability of the kitchen, and any requirements regarding *kashrut*, use of **utensils**, and **clean-up**.
- Be careful to accommodate the teens' **food allergies, chronic diseases**, such as diabetes or celiac disease, and expectations of *kashrut*, just as you would with any snack. **Adapt** the activity or the recipe as necessary.

Guided Visualization

Guided visualizations (sometimes referred to as “guided meditations”) are similar to role plays—but acted on the stage of one’s own mind, with a great deal of side-coaching. Many adolescents appreciate the opportunity to pause and reflect—to close their eyes and focus on something that grounds them. These teens are operating in a whirlwind of early-to-rise, late-to-bed, with lots of social interaction in between. In the midst of texting, snapchatting, talking in the halls, and doing schoolwork, many adolescents do not feel that they “own” their own thoughts, feelings, or imagination.

At the vortex of this commotion, they are trying to balance their lives—academically and socially—and are trying to figure out who they are. Guided visualizations and meditations are opportunities for them to connect with their inner selves and experience their own truth. They are important tools to cultivate in adolescence because they can provide strong internal anchors as they continue to grow and develop.

When leading a guided visualization, it is important to have a good sense of pacing.

Go slowly.

Very.

Slowly.

With lots of time...between directions.

It is essential that you give each participant plenty of time to enter into her imagination.

- If you are not fully comfortable with leading guided meditations, we suggest that you **record yourself, and then try the visualization while listening to your own voice.** (Yes, we know you sound terrible to yourself. Everybody does. Just remember that the teens aren’t listening to see whether your voice sounds funny.) Re-record until you get the pacing right, and make any notes you need in the text.
- **Read** the visualization to the group—do not try to use the tape of your voice.

Many of the principles of role plays (above) also apply to guided visualizations:

- To create a **supportive context** for the visualization, let the teens know that there is no desired outcome—this is just a time to relax and connect with their inner selves. Their lives are filled with pressure and this is a time to let all of that fade away for the moment. Let them know that:
 - Closing one’s eyes is NOT necessary; many people prefer to just soft-focus their eyes on a fixed point in the room.
 - **No one *has* to participate** if they are not comfortable doing so.
 - Anyone who feels stuck or overwhelmed can open or refocus their eyes at any time and **sit quietly and listen**.
 - There is no one right interpretation—this is **imaginative play**.
- Key words in introducing guided visualizations are “**invite**” and “**imagine**.”
- As above, do NOT tell the teens how safe the activity is, lest they immediately worry about why you are reassuring them—causing their sense of safety to actually diminish!
- Much like de-role-ing from role playing, after the visualization, give the participants a way to **SLOWLY and GENTLY return to their normal frame of mind**. This can be accomplished simply by asking them to change seats or stretch, or to observe the room around them and make eye contact with other members of the group.

Movement

Interpretive movement, dance, yoga, and self-defense instruction provide opportunities for movement and **nonverbal self-expression** with one’s whole body. They also help develop a teen’s **kinesthetic sense** (knowing where one’s body is in space) and may help develop **comfort with and pride in her changing body** as she evolves from teen to young woman.

- Make sure that your meeting place has a **floor surface** suitable for the movement activity, so that no one slips or gets rug burns or impact injuries.
- If you are inviting a guest leader for a movement section, make sure that both they and the teens **know what to expect**. If the guest does not already know the teens, **name tags** will help everyone connect.
- The presence of a guest leader is a small and temporary violation of the normal group boundary that should not be ignored. After they have left, plan to take a few minutes to **reestablish the group boundary**, perhaps with a warm-up exercise that emphasizes group bonding.

Music

Music can be used effectively in many ways during the gatherings:

- Many groups use recorded music in the **background** during craft activities. You may wish to ask the teens to bring in appropriate music for this purpose.

- Some older groups have adopted a custom of beginning with **contemporary music chosen by one of the teens**, who also explains why the piece **pertains to the themes of the group**. This is a great opportunity for the teens to begin to take leadership and to express themselves by sharing important parts of their generation’s popular culture.

Finally, we encourage you to **experiment** with all these modalities. ***Most of all—Have Fun!***

Understanding Group Dynamics

Group Roles

In all groups, individuals play out different roles. Often, exploring different group roles are ways in which teens can express who they are through the various stages of group development.

The Controller

This is someone who likes to assert their power in a group. They may attempt to set group standards or steer content to their liking. You can engage them further by asking them to share their influence and authority while talking with them privately. Ask them to reflect on what they can get out of group participation and build from that as a strength.

The Wallflower

This is someone that listens to discussion, and accepts group decisions. They often need more time to consider all the options—allow their space before moving on, give them a job that highlights their strength, and check in during a reminder phone call.

The Joker

They may function as a harmonizer, relieving tension and conflict as a recognition-seeker. You have the opportunity to give them a stage when possible, laugh along and then make the transition to the next activity.

The Challenger

This is someone who may be more resistant or likely to clash heads with others or you. A positive way to engage them is to flip the script—talk with them about taking on opposite roles such as the supporter, summarizer, or includer. Ask them what types of activities they enjoy and support them around these.

The Ringleader

This is someone who may attempt to usurp leadership of the group through drawing attention and engaging in dominating behaviors. You may need to pair teens carefully. Another consideration is to free the ringleader’s side kick from them. A way to work with them and

build trust in the group is to talk to them directly to garner their help. For example, “you are a natural leader, I’m hoping you can help get everyone into this activity—what do you think?”

The Teacher’s Pet

This is someone you can count on to support you through the group process. Often, it is essential for their development to respect their need to NOT have you rely on them.

The Energizer

This is someone who stimulates the group into action. Often, you can direct their energies to stimulate enthusiasm and excitement.

The Monopolizer

They may dominate the conversation and call more attention to themselves while prohibiting others from speaking. The use of additional techniques to manage this include using a talking stick, popcorn talk, or think/pair/share instead of group discussion, or inviting teens to reflect or write their thoughts down before sharing. The beginning of the gathering is an opportunity to welcome participants, recite a prayer for the new month, introduce the foods of the month, and present an opening question relevant to the overall theme of the meeting. The opening question is a springboard for later discussions or activities. It is open but contained, inviting the teens’ voices early, but not encouraging lengthy discussion at this point. You may also choose to insert additional icebreaker activities at this point in the meeting.

Group Stages

Initial Stage: Forming (Gatherings 1-3)

Because most groups only meet once a month, moving through these stages can be difficult. The *Tzelem* materials are designed to help you facilitate the exploration phase of your group. During this stage is when trust is created. By providing safe space for this trust, more intimate relationships among the teens can begin to form. Reach into your bag of tricks to engage teens more with icebreakers and getting-to-know-you activities.

Transition Stage: Storming and Norming (Gatherings 4-6)

Group members are feeling each other out—and you too! This is where potential subgroups may begin to form. The group leader responses during this stage are best if grounded in genuineness and concreteness (maintaining boundaries). This is also when teens begin to take risks if they feel safe. They will learn to enjoy revealing themselves if they feel heard and all teens’ comments are equally valued. Round robins (each teen speaks for two minutes) is a structured way to develop a culture of listening. Consider adding team and trust building techniques to engage teens deeper.

Working Stage: Performing (Gatherings 7-9)

There is less dependence on the group leader to maintain and provide conversation. The group is more self-sufficient regarding roles and norms. During this stage, the group leader can best function with providing activities and feedback and acknowledging what is taking place in the here-and-now of the group. Allow group members to take on additional roles. The host may help prepare parts of the gathering. Be open to feedback and meeting the needs of group participants.

Separation Stage or Termination (Gathering 10)

The group is getting ready to say goodbye. Because we hope that this is a multi-year process for both you and your teens, this stage could even be characterized as separating for the summer months. Providing a clear final session is important. This session provides an opportunity for teens to discuss their thoughts and explore feelings about the group. Conducting an evaluation will help collect the teens' feedback (and provide valuable information to you and your sponsoring institution). If either you or some teens will not be continuing the following year, this could be an important stage to address feelings of loss. It also is an opportunity for celebration (and fun activities/ food to acknowledge it).

Working with Teens of Various Ages

8th Grade

Teens are coming into their own. Often, their involvement in *Tzelem* may be their tie to their Jewish identities. Provide them space to explore emerging thoughts and ideas around the exploration of identity.

As teens are developing their identities, they are also trying on different roles. Allow them the space to explore this within the safe environment of the group.

9th Grade

Teens are participating in more adult-like activities and are less interested in activities geared to children. They are now in high school, so, using your judgement, treat them as adults.

Teens at this age love to talk and assert themselves and their identities. Ask them what is on their minds and provide the chance to develop those thoughts constructively.

10th Grade

Teens behave and should be treated as young adults. They are much more independent and are grappling with a multitude of issues, activities, and learning experiences.

Don't be afraid to open up and talk. These young adults are looking for your wisdom as well as empathy and crave the opportunity to share with you and with each other.

Second-Year Groups

Preparing for a Second Year

In the spring

Planning (and securing funding) for the next year of your group should begin in the spring of your current year!

1. It is important that the teens in your group know that **the intention is for the group to continue together for many years**. Share with them that groups across North America have continued into their third, fourth, and even fifth years! *Tzelem* is an ongoing opportunity for them to grow, learn and gather with friends.
2. **Decide whether there is a need to invite new teens to join the group**. Were there enough teens in the group this year? Even with the best intentions, not all teens return. If a few do not return, will you have enough participants? If you choose to add teens, we suggest that you:
 - a. Involve the current teens by the **next-to-last meeting of the year** and ask them whether they know others who might wish to join. **Gather contact information**, so that you can follow up over the summer.
 - b. Ask the current teens to write **personal notes of invitation** that you will include in correspondence over the summer to the potential members and their parents.
 - c. **Plan how you will integrate** the new members into the existing group.

In the summer

During the summer, you should plan for your group's second year:

1. **Review any feedback you received from the teens at the Closing Month meeting.** Consider how you will incorporate this information as you plan for your monthly meetings.
2. **Consider what leadership roles you will encourage the teens to take on.**
3. **Preview the gathering plans and decide what special events you will incorporate into the coming year**, such as a parent-daughter gathering, field trips, or presentations.
4. **Reconfirm which teens are returning and invite new participants as needed.**
5. **Set dates and meeting location(s) for the year.**

Second Year Materials

When preparing for your second year of meetings, it may be helpful to review what you did last year and tie the material into your discussions and activities for *this year*.

Existing Group/Facilitator Leaving

If you are preparing to leave your job as the group facilitator, and your group will continue with a new facilitator, help set the stage for a smooth transition:

- Let the teens know you will be leaving.
- Ask them what qualities they would like to see in a new facilitator. Share this information with the person who will do the hiring.
- Ask the teens what essential information they would like to let the new facilitator know about the group and make sure that information gets passed on to the new facilitator.
- Ask the teens how they would like to welcome their new facilitator. Do they want to write a collaborative letter or make a card? Set aside a few minutes during the Closing Month for this activity. If you meet the new group leader you can give her this letter; if not, ask your supervisor to give it to her.

Existing Group/New Facilitator

When a new facilitator takes over an ongoing group, there are special challenges for both them and the group members. The group will need time to adjust to and welcome a new person. The teens may be reluctant at first, feeling very attached to their original group leader. The new leader must be sensitive to and respect the group dynamics.

Acknowledge the difficulty in making the transition to a new leader, for both the group and yourself. The more the teens know about you, the more they will feel comfortable with you. To facilitate trust, share about yourself, be open, and maintain a friendly, respectful attitude.

If you have the chance during the summer to speak with the former group leader, by all means, take advantage! Learn some of the rituals that are important and special to the group. Review the monthly logs that the group leader filled out as a record. Ask the former group leader to write the teens a note that you can share at the opening meeting of the second year.

All the best to you!

Parting Words

1. You are the facilitator who attends to group needs and does not impose on, but rather guides the group process.
2. Do not take your position as a role model lightly, also do not forget to use humor.
3. Remember ground rules established to safeguard the integrity and comfort of group members, and keep them holy.
4. Honor each group member, striving to maintain inclusion and balanced participation.
5. Honor your own strengths and limitations in order to be a model for self-awareness, self-acceptance and life-long growth.
6. Do not set yourself up as expert or teacher, rather encourage group members to explore and clarify their own opinions.
7. Do not wed yourself to an agenda so firmly that you fail to respond to spontaneous concerns or insights.
8. Do not forget that group cohesion takes time, but nurture the process to allow trust and comfort to emerge.
9. Do not worry about responding to challenges “correctly,” rather focus on your consistent message of affirmation and support for the growth and learning of your group and each member.
10. Be open, have fun and be true to yourself, thus inspiring your group to do the same.